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How the U.S. and the Soviet Union seek to manipulate

# What You Don't Know CAN



*Both the CIA and KGB distorted the facts when Pope John Paul II was shot in May 1981.*

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ODAY AND every day, Soviet officials and American politicians alike are deceiving you and manipulating your opinion. They channel their deceptions through the media, distorting the news in order to influence your thinking. They deal in selective facts instead of the whole truth. They release through their multiple channels information that often is really disinformation.

The Soviets pump out *dezinformatsia* as part of a \$4 billion-a-year propaganda program. Their objective is to foist falsehoods, fabrications and forgeries on gullible journalists. The American effort is less flagrant. U.S. officials try to manage the news, not manufacture it. Official obfuscation, yes;

deliberate disinformation, no.

First, let's examine the U.S. operation. U.S. officials generally accept the premise that lies eventually will be exposed and the exposure will damage American credibility. Former CIA Director Stansfield Turner refers to this as the "blowback potential."

So, in the war of words, U.S. officials do not sink to the Communist level and trade outright lies. Not only are the Soviets better liars, but they also have no free press to contradict them. In a democracy, the truth has a habit of bubbling to the surface.

This is not to say that U.S. officials always tell the whole story. Instead, they funnel raw facts through a filtering and flavoring process before releasing information to the press. They accentuate the positive and omit the negative.

True, the United States does not operate a formal disinformation machine. But there is one exception: a small, obscure disinformation unit—the "Operational Security/Deception Branch" of the Joint Special Operations Agency—that functions quietly at the Pentagon. In secret guidelines to top Pentagon officials, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has described the purpose of this new unit: "To employ sophisticated strategic deception options."

But the U.S. government certainly was dishing out disinformation even before this unit was established. For example, during the Iranian hostage crisis, President Jim-

my Carter suggested, at a televised news conference on April 17, 1980, that any military action against Iran would be aimed at trade, rather than mounting an invasion or any other combat operation. Then, on April 25—just one week later—the White House disclosed that an airborne mission to rescue the Americans held in Tehran had been launched the day before but had failed. Such deceptions are considered part of military necessity.

In contrast, the Soviet disinformation network is a key component of Soviet foreign policy. Directed by the Kremlin, it employs about 15,000 people.

A KGB disinformation expert, Maj. Stanislav Levchenko, defected in 1979 while he was stationed at the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo. He has been sentenced to death in absentia by his former masters, and his whereabouts in the United States is carefully guarded. Nevertheless, my associate Dale Van Atta was able to arrange an exclusive interview.

The Kremlin is often able to achieve "far more," Major Levchenko said, by "forgeries and manipulation of the foreign media... than by means of legitimate diplomacy." He credits his old unit with the Carter Administration's decision to defer deployment of the neutron bomb.

Disinformation "gets all the manpower it needs," he said. "Its budget is approved directly by the Politburo." As an indication

of the scope of the KGB's disinformation efforts. Levchenko said: "I had a secret notebook where all cable traffic between the [Tokyo] residency and [Moscow] headquarters on [these] operations was registered. That notebook has 3000 entries. It would not be a mistake to say that the Tokyo residency ran a few hundred operations a year."

Here's how a typical operation almost worked in Austria: Last year, the KGB forged a letter from the U.S. Embassy to the Austrian defense minister. It bore the "signature" of Helene Von Damm, then the U.S. ambassador. The letter brazenly urged Austria to abandon decades of determined neutrality and make its airspace surveillance system available to NATO in exchange for U.S. technical and financial aid.


The letter was timed to arrive while the defense minister was out of town. An anonymously mailed duplicate went to an Austrian journalist—a standard KGB technique for planting disinformation. With the minister away, the letter would be filed to await his return. So when the journalist inquired about his fortuitous "leak," the existence of the letter would be confirmed before its authenticity had been determined. Then the journalist's story would be picked up by the Soviet propaganda network and broadcast around the world.

Or so the KGB hoped. Luckily, the defense minister's aide contacted the U.S. Embassy. The letter was identified as an extremely clever forgery.

Once the CIA actually joined the KGB in attempting to distort the news. Not long after I published the first report that the Bulgarian secret police were behind the plot to assassinate Pope John Paul II, the KGB began grinding out documents that portrayed the accusations against the Bulgarians as a CIA ruse.

As I had pointed out, the Bulgarian secret police serve as an appendage to the KGB. Yet the CIA at first seemed anxious to conceal the Bulgarian-KGB complicity. CIA officials tried to convince me that the KGB had nothing to do with shooting the Pope, that the assassination attempt was too unprofessional to be a KGB operation.

Why would the CIA want to protect the KGB? Simple. The late Yuri Andropov headed the KGB when the shooting was planned. After he became the Kremlin kingpin, Washington wanted to clear him of guilt. Otherwise, public outrage would have made it difficult to deal with the Kremlin.

It is my increasingly difficult job, as a monitor of events and critic of politicians, to get the facts straight. Everything I write is double-checked by researchers, editors and a lawyer before it is sent out. Still, facts will get distorted and errors are bound to appear. I can only pledge my own commitment to the principle that democracy's strength lies in the free flow of accurate information to its citizens. 

*By Jack Anderson*